Adventures Along the Oregon Trail

William Parker Montgomery, III

Cascade Montgomery

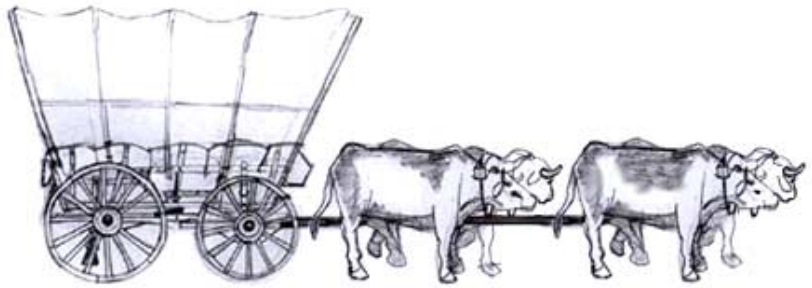
James Polk Montgomery

April 1848

Thursday, April 6, 1848
We arrived in Independence by steamboat. We are on our way out west to meet our Pa in Oregon! I know I am supposed to be brave, but right now I am sorely missing Grandpa and Grandma Montgomery and my pet pig, Sal (named after a book I read called *Salmagundi*, written by Washington Irving). Pa is counting on me to be brave, and if it weren't for that I would have stayed on the steamboat and headed right back to St. Louis. I will just keep telling myself I am not skeered until I actually believe it. Jimmy and Parker are so excited to be in Independence! It is a bustling town, with lots of folks getting ready to head west. I don't quite know how we ever found the trail guide Pa sent. I guess he found us! Captain Jed Freedman is his name, and he is not at all what I expected! When Pa broke his leg and couldn't come back from Oregon to fetch us, Ma gathered us close and said it was her dream to join Pa in Oregon. She believed we had the gumption to get there with the help of this Jed Freedman Pa was sending. But then Ma died. I am not about to show it, but I have an uneasy feeling about leaving home and heading west, even if it was Ma's dream.

Monday, April 10
We spent the last few days buying supplies, a wagon, and a double team of oxen for the trek. Parker has been keeping careful track of every dollar we spend. With all the supplies, I didn't know if we would be able to bring Ma's trunk, but Captain Jed said he would make room. All of Ma's keepsakes are in that trunk! We also bought a milk cow and two hens for eggs. I named one of the hens Sal, after my pet pig from back home. Jimmy named the other one Gallnipper. I don't know why he wanted to name it after a mosquito, but that's just Jimmy. Parker named the milk cow St. Louis. We all decided to name the oxen after our kin back home: Big Will, Ginny, Lizzie, and Stu. We figure they are pushing and pulling for us just like these oxen. I brought the quilt Grandma stitched for us. She told me to wrap myself up in it if I ever get skeered. I am wrapped up in it right now, and we haven't even left Independence. Jimmy told me last night he can't wait to meet Indians. Not me! I have heard a few stories about Indians. They frighten me! Parker said Captain Jed traded with the Indians when he was a trapper, but that does not make me feel much better. I know Pa said he trusted Jed Freedman, but I hardly know him. Besides, I don't know how one man could save us from a whole tribe of angry Indians! For now I will try to keep my mind on other things. Captain Jed said I could bring my satchel with clothes and my precious shoes, Ma's necklace, three books, and the journal Grandpa Montgomery had made special for our trip. I wrote all of our names inside the cover, along with the year of our journey. I can't wait to read it to Pa!

Wednesday, April 12
We are finally heading west to Oregon today. Jimmy drew this sketch of our wagon and oxen.



I overheard some folks say we may run into some heavy storms leaving this early in the spring, but Captain Jed says we can't waste a minute. He wants to make sure we get across the mountains before the snows come. There are seven more wagons in our company besides us. They voted Captain Jed the boss, or wagon master. Three other families decided to go with another company. They didn't want a colored man leading them to Oregon, even if he was the best mountain man on earth. Captain Jed told us to pay no mind. They would learn soon enough not to judge anyone by the color of their skin. I am ashamed to say that I was judging Captain Jed by the color of his skin too. Jimmy liked him right away, but both Parker and I wondered what Pa was thinking! I asked Parker if we could just go back to St. Louis, but he said no. We had already spent most of our money for supplies. Our only choice was to trust our Pa. We are heading to Oregon, and we cannot get there on our own. So, we got up this morning early and prepared to leave with the rest of the company. Then I noticed Jimmy was nowhere to be found! Parker and I asked everyone to wait while we searched for nearly an hour. Parker was determined to find him without Captain Jed's help. When Captain Jed heard Jimmy was missing, he followed Jimmy's tracks and found him quicker than lightning. Jimmy was sitting on a rock down by the river sketching a rabbit for Pa. If Ma were here, she would have given Jimmy a good talking to! He better not wander off again. I sure hope we are doing the right thing heading to Oregon. Lucky for us, this Jed Freedman Pa sent does seem to be a good tracker. I am glad he found Jimmy.

Thursday, April 13

We reached the Santa Fe Junction on our first day of travel! About 20 miles! Captain Jed said most wagon trains only make 15 miles a day. Our day began before dawn, and we stopped at Westport for a mid-day rest and food. About three hours before sundown we finally made camp, and it was my job to prepare supper. Parker made a funny face when he tasted my stew, and I told him he could cook his own stew from now on. I was too tired to even think about being skeered last night. This morning some freight wagons passed us, drawn by teams of mules. They were large Calistoga wagons, and Captain Jed said they were heading down to Santa Fe. I am glad we won't have to eat their dust all day. There was so much dirt flying around I had to put my apron over my mouth to breathe. My eyes are still red and sore. If Pa weren't counting on me, I would turn right around and head back home to St. Louis! Our wagon is packed plumb full, so there is little room to ride or rest my feet. The boxes of food, dishes, pots in the back, sacks of flour and beans, extra rope, tools, chicken crates, extra barrel of water, and lanterns make quite a clatter, but I like it. It should skeer off any snakes or grizzly bears.

Friday, April 14

Tonight we are camping at Lone Elm. I know Pa knows about circling the wagons, but Jimmy wanted to draw a picture of our camp and tents.

We made about 16 miles today. Parker is standing guard tonight to make sure our cattle and animals don't wander off. He must be very tired, after driving our oxen all day. I took him some soup and cornbread for supper, and he didn't even make a face when he ate it. I sure hope no Indians' war party comes around tonight, with Parker guarding our horses and cattle. I could not bear it if anything were to happen to Parker, even if he doesn't like my cooking. I feel bad he is going to miss Captain Jed's tales at the campfire. It is my favorite part of the day. After supper, we sing and tell jokes around the campfire. Pa was right about Captain Jed being a good storyteller. He makes me laugh and forget my troubles. He talks like he knows our Pa real well, and I like hearing tales about their trek to Oregon. Today I helped Parker drive the oxen to give him a rest for a spell. I made sure the wheels were greased good, and I fixed all the meals. After campfire, Captain Jed told me our Ma was right. I have got gumption. I don't know how he knows that about me, but I guess there is no turning back now.

Saturday, April 15

We reached Blue Mound today. It is just a hill next to the trail. No one could tell me why it is called that. It sure wasn't blue. Jimmy and I are still watching out for Indians. Captain Jed said I should not be afraid of them. He told Jimmy that Indians are smart. They can hunt and fish better than most people he has met. They make beautiful necklaces and beaded moccasins. They tell stories too. I still do not understand why they paint their faces and dress so different than we do. I cleared a space in the wagon to hide under the quilt if an Indian rides near our wagons. Everyone in our company has a job to do. I have been cooking most of the meals, and I take turns with Jimmy putting tar on the wagon wheels so they won't wear out. Jimmy has also been milking St. Louis, our cow. He just talks to her and shows her his sketches. She looks at them with her big brown eyes like she understands everything. We shared our extra milk and butter with the other families riding with us. I especially like the McBrides. Their twin girls, Luanne and Suzanne (Annie and Susie), are just six years old. They both have lots of curly red hair just like their Ma, Ellen. Their family came all the way from Ireland. They also brought a dog, Luke, and he has taken a liking to Jimmy. He follows him around everywhere.

Sunday, April 16

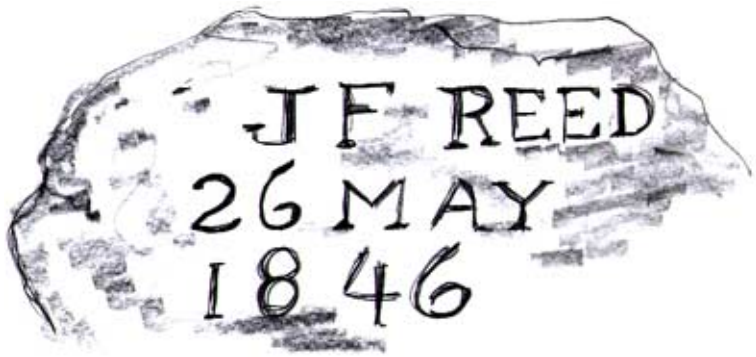
Captain Jed wanted folks to travel on as usual today, but the company voted to rest for a day. We are camped real near the Kansas River crossing. Some folks sang hymns and read from their Bibles. We let the cattle graze. Captain Jed seems restless

to go. He said something about some storms coming. I asked Ellen to teach me how to cook better so Parker wouldn't make such faces. I went with her and the twins to collect some wild onions and carrots for supper. One of twins pulled up a plant that looked an awful lot like a carrot, and Ellen rushed to her and pushed it out of her hand! She said it was poison hemlock! If anyone ate it they'd be dead by morning! We also have to watch out for buttercups, primroses, or the orange blossoms of butterfly milkweed. They may look pretty, but they can make you awful sick. While we were off gathering plants, Parker and Jimmy went hunting with Captain Jed. I think Parker wanted to show Captain Jed he was an expert shot, but he came home empty handed. Lucky for us Captain Jed killed an antelope, dressed it, and the whole company had a feast.

Wednesday, April 19
We crossed the Caw River today. Captain Jed says some folks call it the Kansas River. Some in our company could afford to ferry across the river, but since the current was slow, we saved the money and floated our wagon across it using a large tree pole to guide it. Captain Jed said it was deep enough that we needed to cover the bottom of our wagons with pitch and take off the wheels. Some of the men on horses helped herd the oxen across. It took us most of the day, but everyone made it safely across.

Friday, April 21
Last night we camped near St. Mary's Mission. I thought there might be Indians around the mission, but I did not see any. About noon we should come to the Red Vermillion River Crossing. Captain Jed said there is a toll bridge there we can use, run by a Frenchman named Louis Vieux. He built a little cabin there, and sold us some hay and grain for our oxen. We hope to make it to Scott's Spring by tonight.

Sunday, April 23
We didn't rest the whole day today. It may be Sunday, but Captain Jed talked the company into traveling part of the day so we could make it to Alcove Spring, just west of the trail. There we would find good water, and maybe we could gather more wild onions and carrots. As Captain Jed had predicted, it started to rain, and there is talk that the Big Blue River could swell and be too deep to cross. Everyone feels a little restless and nervous tonight. Jimmy, of course, went exploring as soon as we got to the Alcove Spring. He found a rock that somebody had written on. It said: "J. F. Reed—May 26, 1846."



That started Captain Jed off on one of his tales about a company called the Donner Party, who had an awful time following the Hastings cut-off to California. Captain Jed had heard it was especially tough cutting the brush and crossing the mountains by the Great Salt Lake, and then they lost a wagon and had to bury some of their belongings in the Salt Lake Desert. Their oxen were dying of thirst. Lucky for them they found the Humboldt River! They followed it to its sink, and

then struggled across another desert. That seemed awful bad, but the worst part of the story happened when they were crossing over the mountains to California. They didn't make it before the snows came. The snows were awful bad in the fall of 1846. Captain Jed said folks were stuck in the snow, and they were so hungry they ended up eating people! He said J. F. Reed had been part of that company. He had a little girl too, named Patty Reed. Both of them made it to California alive, but I can't even bear to think about the others who didn't. I wrapped myself tight in Grandma's quilt. Folks in our company were sure anxious to get an early start this morning. We better get over the Oregon mountains before the snows come!

Monday, April 24
Sure enough, the Big Blue is starting to rise. Captain Jed said if the rain lets up a little we might still be able to cross later today or in the morning. In the meantime, some of the men have gone hunting. Those who didn't caulk their wagons at the Caw River are caulking them now. The road is muddy!

Tuesday, April 25
The storm let up by late afternoon, and lucky for us we had no rain last night. We were able to cross the Big Blue this morning, just before another storm. Captain Jed said Pa was delayed almost a week here because of storms and flooding. I am not sure what we will use for campfires at night, since there are fewer trees on this side of the river. I am wrapped up tight in Grandma's quilt again tonight. We are trying to stay as dry as we can under the wagon, but there are flashes of lightning and thunder like I have never seen or heard before. I can't even see all the wagons in our company because the rain is falling in big heavy sheets. Captain Jed said he once was in a storm with hailstones as big as apples! We are lucky we got across the Big Blue when we did. I asked Jimmy to draw a picture of us crossing the Big Blue. It will keep his mind off this storm.

Wednesday, April 26
We finally came to the St. Joseph Road Junction. This is the trail where folks from St. Joseph, Missouri, join up with those from Independence. The road is still muddy, and travel is slow. The storm must have slowed up emigrants from St. Joseph too, because we didn't meet anyone joining the trail from that direction.

Tuesday, May 2
We passed through the Narrows today. The trail follows a very narrow path between the Little Blue River on the left and steep bluffs on the right. We had circled the wagons, and I was fixing our supper when I heard a shriek! It was Jimmy shouting something about finding a snake. My heart started pounding! Sakes alive! Jimmy is not skeered of anything! Sure enough he had run smack into a rattlesnake. Jimmy thinks everyone and everything is his friend, and of course he wanted to draw a picture to show Pa. The snake had other ideas though. He rattled his tail, sprang forward and took a bite out of Jimmy's leg. Jed was right behind me. He made a slit and sucked that

poison out of Jimmy's leg before he hardly knew what had happened. Parker arrived just in time to see that mean critter duck for cover under a rock. And it is a good thing Parker couldn't get a hold of it. I have never seen him quite so mad! I was ready to grab that snake myself and give it a good rattle. Captain Jed said Jimmy should stay as still as can be, so I gave up the place I had cleared in the wagon so Jimmy could ride for the next little while. I sure hope I don't see any Indians until Jimmy is better. It may take some time, because his leg is already swollen. I wrapped him in Grandma's quilt so he would feel safe. Before he fell asleep he said, "Captain Jed saved our Pa's life, and now he has saved mine too." Jimmy won't be sketching any more rattlesnakes I bet.

Saturday, May 6
I never thought I would see such a beautiful sight! I heard someone call it "the coast of Nebraska." We crossed a hill and saw the Platte River Valley spread out beneath us. Captain Jed said we would be at Fort Kearny in one more day. Captain Jed said Fort Kearny is not a real fort yet. He heard a man by the name of Daniel Woodbury was starting some buildings, but for the time being there wasn't much to see. Sure enough, when we finally arrived at Fort Kearney, there was not a wall or picket of a fort anywhere to be seen!

Sunday, May 7
Captain Jed said every year the Pawnee Indians pass by this way on their way to hunt buffaloes. When Pa went through, there were so many of them that a whole day passed and still they saw a steady stream of Indians as they moved their belongings on travois to the north. Captain Jed was happy to rest for a day at Fort Kearny, especially since Jimmy was running a fever, and his leg was still swollen. Rattlesnakes are sure ornery critters, especially in the spring, but Captain Jed said the worst is over. Jimmy will be starting to feel better soon.

Tuesday, May 9
Tonight was the first night I made a fire with buffalo chips. I would much rather have wood! Ellen, the twins, and I collected the chips in our aprons. Of course, Parker says it is woman's work, and he set out to do some hunting. I don't think there should be such a thing as woman's work or man's work, so I asked Captain Jed if he would teach me how to hunt too. A big smile spread across his face, and he said he thought I would make a mighty fine hunter. If I learn how to hunt, then maybe Parker can take a turn collecting buffalo chips. They smell awful! I haven't seen a buffalo yet, but I imagine they must be huge. Their chips are bigger than St. Louis'. That is for sure! We camped at Plum Creek, and I learned how to skip rocks. One of the twins, Annie, fell in the creek and got all wet. I was

glad we could make a fire, even if it was out of buffalo chips, so she could dry off. Poor old Luke is wondering where his best friend, Jimmy, is.

Monday, May 15
We only made five miles today through deep sand. We camped at O'Fallon's Bluffs. When we stopped for our nooner, Annie and Susie found a grave that looked like it had been dug up by wolves. We collected stones and filled the hole again. It is the first grave I have seen on the trail, and I can't help but worry about Jimmy. Captain Jed assures me he will be up and around soon, but I am not so certain. Jimmy looks pretty bad off.

Friday, May 19
The South Platte River is the widest river we have had to cross so far. It is about a mile wide, but quite shallow. Captain Jed told us to keep a watch out for occasional patches of quicksand in the riverbed. Right after the crossing we had a steep climb up California Hill, and then an even steeper descent down Windlass Hill. Parker and Captain Jed unhitched our oxen and put them behind the wagon. I don't think Big Will, Ginny, Lizzi, and Stu were sure what was happening. Those oxen just pulled back as hard as they could instead of forward. That is exactly what Captain Jed had wanted them to do, in order to slow down the wagon. With the back wagon wheels chained and locked, our heavy wagon made it down that steep hill without dumping a single thing. It took us most of the day to do the same for all of our company. Once we were down in Ash Hollow the shade and scenery was a delightful change from the rolling grassy prairie. We did have quite a skeer going down the last hill, but I'll let Parker write about it.

Friday, May 19
Cassie has been pestering me to write a little in this journal too. She says it is our family journal, and we should all say a little about our trip to Oregon. I am not much of a writer. I would much rather add up numbers in the store. Besides that, I have plenty of work to do. I am the teamster for our oxen, and at night I take my turn standing guard. In my free time I would rather be hunting or swimming in the river than writing in a journal, but I promised I would write a little now and then. Today we were going down Windlass Hill, and I just want to say that my friend, Jon, is mighty grateful to be alive! Somehow Jon slipped and fell in front of his wagon. A wheel rolled right over his head! I am not sure if Jon knows how close he came to being cold as a wagon wheel! Dead! The ground was a little muddy, and that is the only reason I can think of why he is still alive. So far Jon and Jimmy have been the only who have been injured. It is good to see Jimmy feeling a little better. He got out of the wagon for a while today. Sorry to say, Jon is looking worse for the wear. He has a bump on his head about as big as an elephant.

Parker

Monday, May 22
We camped at Ash Hollow for several days, putting wagons back together and fixing wheels that had broken on Windlass Hill. The bed of the stream looked completely dry within the hollow, but we found fresh water near its mouth. It was the best tasting water we have had since we left Independence! It was easy to see that several others had camped in this area before us. Remains of their old campfires were still seen, and several names had been carved in the trees. We looked for Pa's name but couldn't find it anywhere.

Friday, May 26
Tonight we camped near what looked to me like a castle. I heard people calling it Courthouse Rock, and someone said it reminded people of the courthouse and jail in St. Louis. I guess it does, but it seems much larger to me. Jimmy must be feeling a little better because he is begging to go carve his name in the rocks. It is about five miles to the left of the trail. Captain Jed asked him if he would just draw a picture of it instead.

Saturday, May 27
When we left Courthouse Rock we could see another of nature's wonders off in the distance. Captain Jed said it was called the Chimney. It looks more like a haystack with a pole running far above its top. Near the Platte I saw a field of tiny animals poking their heads out up from the ground. Ellen said it was a prairie dog village. Jimmy, of course, wanted to investigate. As he approached, one gave a little cry, wagged its tail and then scurried down into its hole. We had heard so much about Chimney Rock that we decided to spend Sunday here too. I wanted to climb to its base with Parker, but I decided to stay with Jimmy instead. He is feeling much better. He is not well enough to climb up Chimney Rock yet, but he is well enough to draw two sketches.

Sunday, May 28

Cassie has been doing most of the writing in our Montgomery Journal. It is Sunday and most folks in our company are reading or resting. I couldn't resist climbing Chimney Rock. I clambered up the Chimney on its south side. It seemed near impossible to climb clear up to its top. As you know it runs straight up about 200 feet or more. I engraved our family name, Montgomery, and the date. Then I looked over and saw Jenny Smith had cut a foot hole in the soft rock and was carving her name two feet higher than mine. Jenny is a girl a little older than me. I just had to do one better than her, so I made some foot holes too, climbed the highest anyone had dared, and then carved my name, Jimmy's and Cassie's. When I got back to camp and told Captain Jed, he did not seem too pleased that I carved our names in Chimney Rock. He said the land was precious. Some rocks, rivers, and mountains are considered sacred to the Indians. He said that some people carved their names in rocks to leave a message for friends and families planning to travel the trail later or to record the names of those who had died. But he did not think we should carve up the land just for the fun of it.

Parker

Monday, May 29

Captain Jed said Scott's Bluff on the right of the trail bears the name of an old mountain man who died here from sickness and starvation. This must be the beginning of another pretty rough stretch. Our oxen began pawing and bellowing loudly, and Parker was having a terrible time trying to keep them from running away with our wagon. Jimmy looked off in the distance and asked what that big black cloud was moving against the hills. It didn't look like a thunderstorm. Before Captain Jed could reply, we heard other folks pointing to the cloud and crying, "Buffalo, buffalo!" Sure enough, covering the whole plain was the biggest herd of buffalo I had ever seen. Of course, I had never even seen one buffalo before today. They were some distance away, but several of the men asked Captain Jed to help them shoot one for supper. Parker, of course, wanted to go too, but Captain Jed refused. He said Parker needed to stay with the wagons. When oxen get around buffalo they are real hard to control. We circled the wagons and put the oxen in the center to keep them from running off. Parker moped around camp for a good few hours until the men returned from their hunt. Sure enough they had fresh buffalo meat, and we had an awful good supper that night. Parker thinks Captain Jed doesn't think he is man enough to go on a buffalo hunt, and he told me he would not eat one bite of buffalo until he shoots one for himself. He shot and cooked up a rabbit. Parker may get awful hungry before we get to Oregon.

Tuesday, May 30
Some folks stopped at Robidous Pass Trading Post to pick up a few tools to repair broken wagon wheels. Only a few more days to Fort John, just across the Laramie River. I still haven't seen an Indian, but Captain Jed says where there are buffaloes, there are usually Indians. They are experts at hunting buffaloes, and they use every little piece of the buffaloes they hunt. Nothing goes to waste. That was the second time I had been reminded about being careful not to waste anything today. This morning I made batter for pancakes. I was going to send Jimmy to the stream to fill a pitcher with water, but he was nowhere to be found. I had to do it myself. When I returned to camp, the batter was ruined! It was all black and covered with mosquitoes! I started to dump them out, saying, "Those dern gallnippers!" Captain Jed caught me and said, "We can't waste a thing, Cassie. Just stir them up good, and fry those cakes on a real hot griddle." Of course, Parker made a face, but Jimmy said they were the best hotcakes he had ever eaten. They were crunchy!

Thursday, June 1
Today I saw an Indian up close for the first time. Several braves rode into our camp to trade. I was skeered at first, but Captain Jed said we would be fine if we traded fairly with them. When they were done, Jimmy and I went walking along the river. We noticed in the distance an Indian woman washing a young child in the stream. Her baby was sleeping in a cradleboard near the bank of the river. There were other Indian women a little farther away. At first Jimmy and I hid behind the bushes so she wouldn't see us. We watched for a while. She seemed to be laughing with her child and having a wonderful time, just like we did when we went swimming in the river. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw something move in the bushes. It looked like a wild dog or wolf. That old dog looked awful hungry. He jumped toward the cradleboard, grabbed a piece of it, and began dragging the baby away. Without thinking, I ran toward the baby. I picked up a large rock on my way and threw it at that wild varmint, yelling, "Get away!" The Indian woman heard the commotion and rushed to her baby too. She saw the wild dog growl then run off, and she knew I had helped protect her little one. She looked to be a little older than Parker, not that much older than me. I thought she was beautiful, with dark eyes and dark braided hair. Her babies were beautiful too. I didn't know how to say anything to her, but before I knew it she was taking off her necklace and handing it to me. Other Indians were gathered around us too, but I was not at all skeered. Jimmy could not believe I had been so brave, and he told the whole camp about it at campfire. Captain Jed just smiled and said "gumption." I am sure that beautiful Indian woman could have saved her own baby, but I was glad I got to help her. It made me feel good. The Indian necklace has colorful beads, and it is a lot different than Ma's silver chain. If I wear it, it might get lost. I'll keep them both tucked safely in my satchel in the wagon, and I'll wear them plenty once I get to Oregon. I think I'll remember this day for a long, long time.

Saturday, June 3
We ferried across the Laramie River and reached Fort John. Some call it Fort Laramie, since it is near the Laramie River. It is a fur trading post. There were a number of emigrants at the fort who needed the blacksmith to shoe oxen and repair axles or wagon wheels. Fort Laramie is not much to look at, but it is still a welcome site. The main building is an old cracked adobe structure with a wall about twelve feet high. There are no windows on the outside, but it has a balcony. It doesn't look like it is made too well, and I bet if someone kicked the outside beam it might fall down. I told Jimmy not to touch it.

Sunday, June 4
We traded with a camp of Oglala Indians near the fort. Parker, Jimmy and I met some Indian children and we learned a new hoop and pole game. Parker learned the game quickly and was able to toss the poles through the hoops like an expert. Jimmy and I had a much harder time, and the Indian children laughed at us. It takes a lot of skill to be able to shoot a bow and arrow, or throw a spear at a target! I was pleased to see Jimmy was feeling much better. Jimmy traded a whistle Captain Jed had made him for a small piece of tanned buffalo skin. He wants to paint an Indian story on it like he has seen on tepees. We also saw a buffalo and dog dance. In the buffalo dance, some Indian men wore skins and buffalo horns on their heads. They shook their heads and bellowed like buffaloes. They looked a lot like the buffaloes we saw on the prairie, and I wondered if that disguise helped them hunt buffaloes sometimes. Later I was surprised to see some of the same tall, young Indian men walking with their Indian wives and children near the fort.

Monday, June 5
We met some Mormon men at the fort today. They seemed polite, but in a hurry to get their blacksmith repairs done so they could move on. Ellen told me the Mormon Trail started in Nauvoo, Illinois. It follows the north side of the Platte River, and since we were on the south side, it isn't likely we will get acquainted with their wives or children. They keep to themselves, and probably for good reason too. It sounds like they have been through some awful hard times. Ellen said after their leader, Joseph Smith, was killed, mobs forced them to leave their homes in Nauvoo. Some of them had to cross the Mississippi River in the middle of winter! Ellen said their new leader, Brigham Young, felt inspired to lead them west to settle near the Great Salt Lake. Later Captain Jed told me he had never seen the Great Salt Lake, but he had heard from Jim Bridger that it was pretty desolate country, not at all like the fertile lands of Oregon. It makes me glad Pa settled in Oregon,

even if it is a long ways away. Jimmy has been working real hard on his buffalo skin picture story.

This is what the pictures say: “The people had walked many days. At campfire, one boy met a bad snake. A wise man helped the boy. The boy was happy.”

Monday, June 12

We stayed a week at Fort John, trading, hunting, fishing, and getting repairs. I wrote letters to Grandma and Grandpa Montgomery back home. I crosshatched my writing, so I could get as much on a page as possible, since paper is so scarce. I told them all about Jimmy learning to paint Indian stories on his buffalo skin. Captain Jed showed his sketches to some of his Indian and trapper friends. They liked them too. The fort was a place of refuge, but there was also a lot of gambling and drinking by settlers, trappers and Indians that I did not like. Some settlers were discouraged after losing loved ones and having more than their share of bad luck. They were preparing to turn around and head back east. Jed said there was talk of selling the trappers’ fort to the United States military. I think most emigrants would be grateful if an army of men were at the fort to assist and protect them, but I don’t think the Indians would like it much. We waited out another storm that would have made travel difficult. Captain Jed kept saying we needed to keep moving, but it felt good to have a long rest. Yesterday some of the emigrants who arrived at the fort said some in their company were sick with cholera. That did it. Captain Jed decided it was time to move on. We pulled out that afternoon. I am worried about leaving the Indian friends we made at the fort. I hope they move on too, so they don’t catch cholera. I am also worried about Annie. She has not been well since she fell in Plum Creek. Captain Jed says it isn’t cholera or consumption, but she has a bad cough. It is probably the grippe. I had hoped the long stay at Fort Laramie would help her feel better. She has been drinking lots of water and tea. Ellen gave her some lecithin this morning. I hope that will help.

Tuesday, June 13

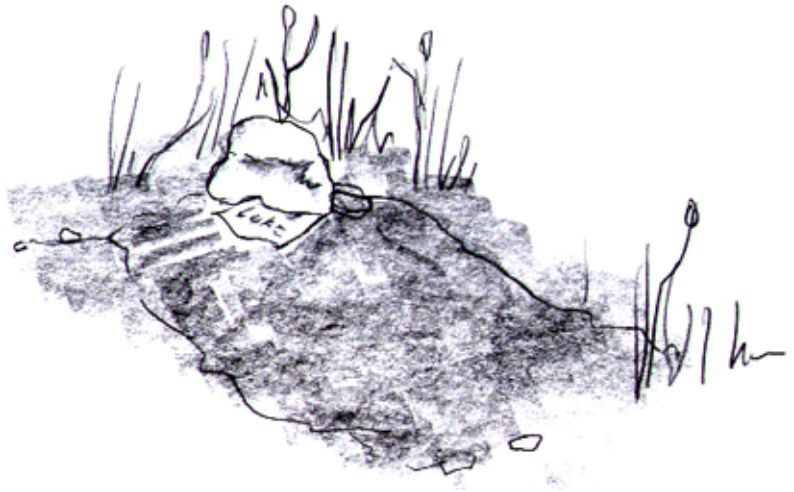
Today we passed by Register Cliff, and Jimmy saw the names of many pioneers engraved on the rocks. He was itching to carve his name in the rocks too, but I told him Captain Jed would not approve of that. He begged Captain Jed to let him at least try to find Pa’s name. Finally Captain Jed agreed. Jimmy does have a mind of his own, and Cassie and I went along to make sure Jimmy didn’t run into any more snakes. Even after getting bit by a rattler, he is not always as cautious as he should be. I was the first to find Pa’s name, William

Montgomery II. I felt so proud to be standing in the same place as Pa was when he passed this way in 1844! I plan to find Pa's name carved in Independence Rock too, if it is there. I heard several companies are planning to meet there for a big Fourth of July celebration.

Parker

Saturday, June 17
We camped near Ayers Bridge, a big rock archway. I loaned Annie my Grandma's quilt to wrap up in. She is too weak to walk, and she has been riding in their wagon today. I held Susie's hand walking on the trail so she wouldn't miss her sister so much. She especially liked singing Old Susanna, since that is her name. We made up some silly verses she could sing for her sister about Old Luanna when we stopped for campfire. Ellen's eyes look awful tired today too.

Thursday, June 22
There is a ferry service across the North Platte River, but there was a long line waiting to use the ferry. Since the river is about 200 feet wide and only three feet deep, our company decided to float across. We went across first, with our oxen still hitched to the wagons. St. Louis swam across, tied to the back of the wagon. Luke was swimming along the side of the wagon when suddenly one of our oxen decided to swim upstream instead of with the current. The wagon started to tip over, but hit a rock and uprighted itself. I am not sure how it happened, but Luke was pinned between the wagon and the rock. Parker jumped out and tried to rescue him, but it was too late. Even though Luke wasn't our dog, I never saw Jimmy cry so hard. We dug a hole and put him in the ground. Jimmy scratched his name in a rock, and left a sketch under it on his grave. Little Susie helped pat the dirt down real tight, so no wolves would come and dig up Luke.



Saturday, June 24
We camped at Emigrant Gap. I am not feeling so well tonight. Maybe I am just feeling sad for Jimmy and the twins about losing Luke. I sure hope I haven't caught Annie's grippe or eaten a poisonous plant or something. The water has lots of little wiggly things swimming around in it, but it is all we have. I keep remembering Ellen saying hemlock can kill a person faster than lightning. I am not dead yet, so I am quite sure I didn't eat hemlock. Jimmy and I both know what it looks like, and we watch out for those white roots with a lot of smaller roots poking out! I may be sick, but I am not going to complain. Lots of other folks have it worse off than me.

Sunday, June 25
At Willow Springs I finally got my wish to hunt buffalo. I begged Captain Jed to take me along on the hunt with the other men. The herd wasn't too far from camp, and Jenny Smith's Pa

said he would help with the oxen in our camp. He loaned me the use of his horse too. Captain Jed finally agreed to let me come along. I wanted to show everyone I could be the first to shoot a buffalo. Maybe I would even shoot two or three! Captain Jed warned me that buffalo hunting can be dangerous and that we should only kill what we need. Any little thing could set them off on a stampede. I have to admit I didn't pay him much mind. When we got close to the buffalo herd, maybe I was too excited or too much in a hurry. My gun accidentally fired, and that set the whole herd running right toward our camp. The men had to work quickly to save our wagons. No one came home with buffalo meat tonight, and I feel it is all my fault. Captain Jed didn't say much, only that he was glad no one was trampled to death. He just shot a few geese and rabbits for us to cook up. I feel awful bad, not only because I have missed my chance to shoot a buffalo. Even worse, I feel like I have let Captain Jed down again.

Parker

Wednesday, June 28

We breakfasted this morning at the base of Independence Rock. It is near the Sweetwater River, but the water flowing in it does really taste sweet. We had heard there was a great Fourth of July celebration planned at Independence Rock, but we also heard some of the camped emigrants were sick with cholera or scurvy. We could avoid getting scurvy if we ate dried fruit or pickles, but cholera was deadly and that had us all worried. Captain Jed said he preferred we did not write our names on the rock with buffalo grease, like some of the other emigrants. He thought it was best to keep moving on. He had seen how fast cholera spreads, and he knew Ellen, Annie, and some others in our group were already weak and sick. We would still have an Independence Day celebration further down the trail. Before we left, most of us climbed up on that big rock and tried to find messages from folks we knew who had gone before us to Oregon. We never found Pa's name, but from the top of Independence Rock we could see three encampments, and even more wagon trains coming in from a distance. Parker counted about 120 wagons, with close to 700 or 800 animals. In the distance Parker spotted another herd of wild buffalo. I could tell he wanted another chance to prove himself.

Thursday, June 29th

About five miles up from Independence Rock, we came to a place Captain Jed called Devil's Gate. The Sweetwater River cuts through a granite ridge here. Up to this point the Mormons had kept to themselves, following the north side of the Platt. Here the trails merged, and we camped fairly close to each other. We could hear their singing and fiddle music that night as we drifted off to sleep. The last thing I heard was their camp

guards yelling to each other, “All is well!” This morning, while the wagons were going around that narrow opening, some of us climbed the Gate’s rocky walls. We could hear our own laughter echoing through the canyon. Ma would have told me I should act more like a lady, but it felt good to play on the rocks. Jimmy stayed pretty close, and he claimed it was because he wanted to protect me in case a snake happened along. Jimmy still likes to explore, but I think he is taking to heart some of Captain Jed’s tales about children wandering off, never ever to be seen again.

Tuesday, July 4
At Split Rock Captain Jed felt it was best to take the southern route, and just cross the Sweetwater River once. If it rained we might hit quicksand, but after almost tipping over at the last river crossing, we wanted to avoid the north route and crossing the river three times. Since it was the Fourth of July, we camped early. We sang songs, danced, and most of the men fired their guns in the air. Parker even let Jimmy and me fire his gun to celebrate Independence Day. Ellen seemed to be feeling a little better, and Annie got up and drank a little soup. We were all feeling quite patriotic.

Wednesday, July 5
We met two hunters today traveling in an awful hurry. They were sent after buffalo, but instead ran into a grizzly bear and her two cubs. They managed to kill the bear and one of the cubs, but had taken the other cub alive. Tired from the chase, the hunters stopped to rest at the water’s edge, when suddenly the cub got a second wind. It stood up on its hind legs and growled so fiercely the hunters thought they had better skiddadle quick! They were riding toward us in an awful hurry and warned us we might see an angry grizzly up ahead! I had my gun ready, but unfortunately I never saw that angry cub. I was hoping I could show Captain Jed I wasn’t afraid to take on a grizzly.

Parker

Thursday, July 6
Captain Jed showed us how to make ice milk today. There is a place on the southern route along the Sweetwater where ice can be found even on the hottest day of summer, just by digging a short way beneath the soil. St. Louis isn’t producing much milk these days, but we still had enough to have ice and cold milk for everyone in the company. Never had anything tasted so good on a hot day!

Wednesday, July 12
We wouldn’t have known we were heading uphill over the Rocky Mountains if Captain Jed hadn’t told us. The ascent at South Pass is so gradual that it is hardly noticeable. Captain Jed said when he and Pa went through this area at South Pass they came upon an Indian village of about three hundred tepees. There was a quick yell, the tepees were torn down, and everything was packed up quick. One of Captain Jed’s friends, Pegleg Smith, came out and said he couldn’t convince them not to be skeered of the white man’s “walking lodges.” Captain Jed told us that is what they called our covered wagons. Here I have been afraid of the Indians all this time. I never thought about them being skeered of me.

Friday, July 14
Captain Jed asked us if we noticed anything different about the water here at Pacific Springs. It didn’t take us long to see that the water flowed toward the west, instead of toward the east.

We hip-hawed and shouted hooray because we knew that meant we were finally on the westward side of the Rockies. Even though we were tired, and some of our oxen were having a hard time pulling the heavy loads, we felt like we were getting closer than ever to Oregon. I watched Susie and Annie for a time so Ellen could rest. She told me today she is going to have a baby. She said that is why she was feeling a little more tired than usual.

Saturday, July 15
We came to the split in the trail that some folks call "Parting of the Ways." The fork to the right heads straight to Fort Hall. The fork to the left leads to Fort Bridger. Captain Jed has told us so much about Old Gabe, the whole company voted to head to Fort Bridger on the chance we will actually get to meet the famous mountain man, Jim Bridger. We almost had a more serious parting of the ways today. Jenny Smith was cooking supper and accidentally got too close to the fire. Her dress started to burn. She could have been burned to death had it not been for Parker's quick thinking. He quickly doused her with a bucket of water, and used his own hands to beat the rest of the flames out. Parker turned red when Jenny thanked him for being so brave.

Thursday, July 20
The Shoshoni Indians and Chief Washakie helped us across the Green River today. It sounded like they had helped many settlers across this river, and even saved several from drowning. They seemed very friendly, especially when Captain Jed talked to them in their own language. Jenny and Parker are spending a lot of time together since the fire. She even baked him a wild berry pie. They have become good friends. I guess that is what happens when you save someone's life. Parker has not mentioned buffaloes one time since then.

Friday, July 21
I learned a new word last night: Ren-day-voo. Ellen says it is spelled Rendezvous, and it is a French word that means meeting place. Captain Jed told us that trappers would come from all over the West to meet and trade with Indians at a big rendezvous. One of the first rendezvous was held right here in the Green River Valley. Captain Jed said it was quite a party! Besides trading, there was gambling, shooting, and horse racing contests. It really lifted the spirits of trappers and traders who had been on their own for so many weeks. It sounds like they told some pretty tall yarns about petrified forests or coming face to face with a grizzly bear.

Tuesday, July 25
Fort Bridger is an Indian trading post built of poles and mud. Captain Jed introduced us all to Jim Bridger, a mountain man he greatly admires. He calls him Old Gabe. He said he built this fort back in 1843, and he had met our Pa on his way to Oregon. Though Bridger can't read or write, he can speak about a dozen Indian tongues, besides English, French, and Spanish. The supply post he built on the Black Fork of the Green River is not much to look at, but it looked wonderful to us. Captain Jed stayed up most the night talking with Old Gabe about other mountain men they had known. They talked about poor Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissus. Both felt real bad they had been killed by the Cayuse Indians and their mission burned down. Dr. Whitman had operated on Jim Bridger and taken an arrowhead out of his back, so he knew the doctor and his wife real well. He thought they were fine people. They shared yarns about the Mormons, the Indians, the Donner Party, and the rumor that big gold nuggets were being found in California. They both knew if that were true, there would be a rush of folk heading through these parts like they had never seen before. They also talked about the Indians living in California. Many had already died from new diseases brought by the Spanish. Now the rush for gold would bring even more challenges.

Friday, July 28
We rested a day and then headed north to Fort Hall. The Mormons are heading southwest to that great desert near the Salt Lake, and I guess we won't see the dust from their wagon trains anymore. I don't know how they are going to farm that hard desert land, but just like us, they are willing to sacrifice everything they have to meet up with family and friends who have gone ahead. Captain Jed said he is pretty sure they will be left alone settling around the Great Salt Lake, unless somebody finds gold in those hills. That seems to be what everyone is whispering about these days, the gold strike at Sutter's Mill. Some in our group are even talking about heading to California instead of Oregon, but they are not about to take the Hastings cutoff! No sirree! Only half of the Donner party made it all the way to California. I can tell folks are worried about making it to Oregon before the snows, even with Captain Jed's help. We are pretty worn out! St. Louis is hardly giving any milk these

days. We let her graze in the grass near the fort, but there really wasn't much grass there for any of our cattle. It had already started to dry up in this summer heat. I sure hope there is more up by Fort Hall. Ellen, the twins, and I went for a walk along Black Creek, looking for roots and perhaps some early berries. It was good to see both Ellen and Annie feeling much better.

Tuesday, August 1
Crossing Thomas Fork River was the hardest yet. It has swift currents, slippery rocks, and real steep muddy banks. Jenny Smith's family lost all their food, their wagon and one of their oxen. Her Pa almost drowned trying to save what little he could. They didn't want to cross that river again, or they might have headed back to Fort Bridger. We all met and voted to share our supplies, at least until we can reach Fort Hall. The same thing could have happened to any of us. Fort Hall isn't too far away. Jenny slept with me under our wagon last night.

Thursday, August 3
We came to Big Hill today. It is an awful steep descent! Folks had left all kinds of treasures at the top. There were dresser drawers, a mirror, and even some fancy china. Sorry to say there was no food left, and a bag of cornmeal was far more precious than china to everyone in our company. The Smiths actually laughed and said they wished someone had left a wagon at the top of the hill. Despite their hardships, they seem to be grateful to be alive. People in our company are lightening their loads too. It is far better to lighten the load at the top than to risk losing everything on the way down. I doubt anyone will ever come back for their treasures, but I guess you never know.

Friday, August 4
We met Mr. Thomas "Peg-Leg" Smith today, at Smith's Trading Post. He wasn't much of a help to us. It appears he heard about gold being found in Sutter's Mill too, and was expecting a big rush of gold-seekers coming this way. He did have an extra wagon he sold to the Smiths at a good price. Because he had the same last name as them, he thought maybe they were related some way, and he should be kind to his kin. He told us about Soda Springs, which is not far from here. Some call it "Beer Springs." We heard the water there fizzles in your mouth, and you don't even have to light a fire under it to make it boiling hot. In some places the earth is perfectly white, and in others red. Jimmy and I can't wait to see it and taste it.

Saturday, August 5
We reached Soda Springs by mid afternoon. It is a wonder! We passed one spring that gives off a sound like a steamboat. It reminded us of our trip from St. Louis to Independence. That sure seems like a long time ago. Captain Jed says we are more than halfway to Oregon. We are planning to stay here three days. The bread we make with this water tastes the best of any we have had on this trip. I wish we could take some of it with us on to Oregon. We all went exploring together, since Parker thought it best not to let Jimmy off on his own, with the risk he might fall into one of these boiling caldrons.

Sunday, August 6
My friend, Jon, made a wager he could stop the flow of water coming from a spring just by setting over the hole here at Soda Springs. We all had a good laugh when he sat himself down, and then before he knew what was happening he just started bobbing up and down. I tried to grab him, along with some other men. We all tried to hold him down so he could keep his bet, but the hot water kept bubbling and building up on his behind. Finally he cried out, "There's just no use trying to hold that devil down! No siree!" He flew off that boiling hole and walked a little funny for the next few days.

Parker

Tuesday, August 8
At Sheep Rock there was talk of some in our company heading to California along the Hudspeth's Cutoff. After a vote, everyone decided to stay with Captain Jed. No one was willing to take risks like the Donners. Even if President Polk had settled the war with Mexico in February and California was now part of the United States, it was still like a foreign country. Some believed if gold had been discovered in California, maybe there was gold to be discovered in the Oregon territory too. Between all of us, our stock of flour is extremely low. We do still have some dried buffalo jerky, and we are hoping to get some more provisions at Fort Hall. We cooked a little tobacco root. I didn't like the taste of it, but Jimmy ate it all. Captain Jed told us the Indians in these parts eat it all the time. He also told us about Kit Carson, a great scout and mountain man, who camped with Pa's group as they were traveling through these parts. Kit Carson had helped Captain Fremont as he explored the West. Of course, everyone had heard of Captain Fremont. Some folks called him "The Pathfinder." They'd been inspired by his talks and writings about Manifest Destiny, and he had encouraged lots of emigrants to head west to a land of opportunity. He inspired people and told them it was the United States' destiny to reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. Pa and Ma were inspired too. Ma told us Pa was excited about the prospect of free land in the West, but for him

heading west was also like a great crusade! I guess Parker, Jimmy and I are all part of that crusade now. Manifest Destiny! It is exciting. As more and more people settle in the West, it looks like Captain Fremont's dream is really coming true.

Tuesday, August 15

On our route to Fort Hall, we circled the wagons but when we tried to sleep we heard noises that sounded like a pack of wolves howling nearby. It made us all uneasy. Captain Jed told Parker and the other guards in our camp to stay alert, and to watch the cattle and horses. It was also important keep the fires burning, and we all took a turn at stocking the fire. Wolves wouldn't usually come close to a burning fire. Captain Jed tried to calm our fears, but no one felt much like sleeping. When the howling stopped, the gallnippers were so thick you could reach out and grab a handful. We were actually relieved in the morning to find only two of our horses were missing. We never did know what had happened to them. They could have just been spooked off. Up to this point the Indians had always helped us, but that morning I was surprised to hear some folks grumbling and accusing the Indians of stealing our horses. That was one of the only times I ever saw Captain Jed lose his temper. He said he did not want to hear any more of that kind of talk! Indians didn't usually attack settlers, and he told everyone in the camp they better calm down. If we had gotten in the middle of an Indian dispute, it would be much wiser for us to head straight to Fort Hall instead of wasting time chasing after Indians to accuse them of stealing our horses. I was very glad when we finally reached Fort Hall. A fur trader named Nathaniel Wyeth built it in 1834. It was run by the Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company, but most everyone we met said fur trading was coming to an end.

Wednesday, August 16

Still at Fort Hall, there was a lot more talk about traveling to Oregon and to California. I listened to some who were trying to discourage us from heading on to Oregon. They spoke about the dangers of rafting down Columbia River. They warned us that the Snake Indians had been warring with the Sioux, Crows, and Blackfeet too. Apparently they had been warring with some settlers too. I think they were just trying to skeer us. Some men at the fort were trying to talk emigrants into going to California. They heard California was no longer under the flag of Mexico, and that John Sutter was offering sections of his Mexican land grant to anyone who wanted to settle around his fort near the American River. With the rumor that gold had been found there, it was a mighty tempting offer, and I could tell there were some in our group who were listening. They had a hard decision to make that night.

Friday, August 18

We left Fort Hall with only five wagons and families. The others had decided to try their luck in California. They were going to wait at Fort Hall and join a new company heading south to California along the Humboldt River to gold country. They felt there was still time to get over the mountains and into California before winter. I was so glad the Smiths and the McBrides were heading on to Oregon, I didn't pay much attention. We slept that night near American Falls, and for once had a peaceful sleep. Not too many mosquitoes were around, and it was comforting to listen to the sound of the water as it rolled over the rocks. Next day we had to go through an outlet so narrow that only one wagon could pass through at a time. Captain Jed said if the Indians were angry with us, this would be a good spot for a massacre. But we had done nothing to hurt

the Indians, and he wasn't the least bit worried. We made it through safely.

Saturday, August 19
We reached Raft River today. This is where we part company with those heading down to the Humboldt River and the California trail. Since leaving Fort Hall, the road has been bad. There is little grass and many steep descents over this rocky earth. Captain Jed says the folks heading to California have a hard road ahead of them too.

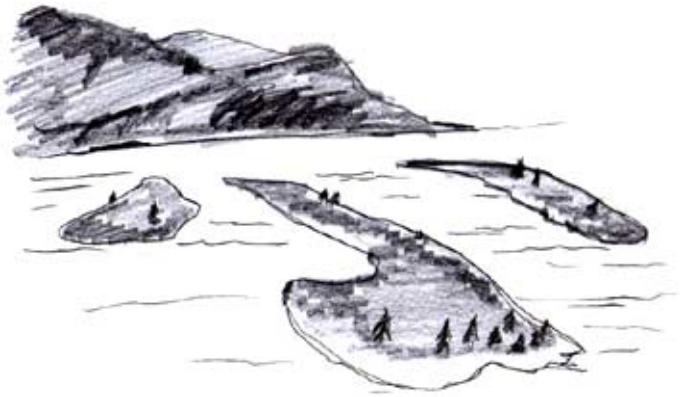
Friday, August 25
Today we only made ten miles and camped on a high bluff by the Snake River. The ground is level here, and it goes right up to the edge of the bluff, then drops straight down into a huge canyon, three or four hundred feet below. Captain Jed said that Shoshone Falls is a sight to behold, so we took an extra day to travel a few miles out of our way to see that mountain of water tumbling over huge boulders and crashing into the river below. I will never forget that sight! We could still hear the sound of Shoshone Falls from our camp five miles away! I was glad I wasn't in a boat floating down that river. We traveled south of the river and passed over Rock Creek Gorge, a steep downhill descent into the canyon between two high bluffs, to get water. At Rock Creek Crossing the water didn't appear nearly as wild. It was about 20 feet wide and two feet deep, so although we had trouble traveling over big rock boulders, the creek wasn't too difficult to cross.

Monday, August 28
As we approached Salmon Falls, many Indians were fishing in the rapids. It looked like they had clotheslines out with drying clothes, but as we got closer the red clothes were really salmon drying in the sun. Jimmy had his pole in the water all evening tonight. He tried to talk sign language with the Indians to find out how they became such expert fishermen. Parker and Jenny Smith went along with Jimmy too, to make sure he didn't accidentally fall in the rapids. Jimmy told them even if he did fall in, the Indians would fish him out. He still is not afraid of a thing. As much as I like to fish, I decided to stay and help Ellen with the twins. Jimmy came home with enough salmon for supper and stories to tell for both of us.

Jimmy said the Indians called this place Kanaka Rapids. Captain Fremont had called this area Fremont's Fishing Falls. All along this valley are wonders. Thousands of springs flow out of a rocky cliff just north of the trail. It is beautiful, with good water. Captain Jed knew some of the Shoshoni Indians fishing in the rapids. He said they were called "Salmon Eaters." Other Shoshoni tribes survived on roots or sunflower seeds, and they were called "Root Eaters" or "Sunflower Seed Eaters." Still others followed the buffalo, and they were called "Buffalo Eaters." The different tribes often traded with each for the tools or foods they lacked. The Indians were kind to us and helped Jimmy and me fish. They told Captain Jed that many white men had not been as kind to them, especially to the Buffalo Eaters. There were more and more fights over buffalo. The white men wasted so much of the buffalo. They would skin the animals and leave the rest to rot on the plains. Captain Jed had seen the greed of some men to sell buffalo hides, and he could not defend their actions. He could only assure the Shoshonis that no one in his company had ever killed buffaloes for sport or greed. As white people were bringing their white houses across the plains, he knew there would be more concern and talk among the Indians because of their fear that there would not be enough buffaloes to support everyone.

Saturday, September 2

At Three Island Crossing we had to make another hard decision. Should we follow the south side of the river, or cross over and take the shorter, easier route on the north side of the Snake to Fort Boise? We had already had enough trouble crossing rivers, but there was more grazing land on the north side. Still, with three islands, this was like crossing three rivers, all about 1000 feet wide. The river looked shallow in most spots, but Captain Jed told us we might hit a hole in the riverbed six to eight feet deep. Most in our company had already lost livestock or wagons crossing rivers, and we weren't too eager to cross the Snake. Captain Jed said we could play it safe and take the southern route, but it was some of the most rugged desert and dreary country he had ever seen. It was a barren wilderness. He encouraged us to cross over at Three Islands. Fortunately we were able to cross to the north side without any problems.



Wednesday, September 13
We arrived in Fort Boise. Captain Jed told us the Hudson Bay Company had built Fort Boise in 1834. Outside were horse corrals, a blacksmith shop, and stores. The boundary dispute with England had been settled in 1846, so Fort Boise, like the rest of the Oregon Territory, was officially part of the United States. Captain Jed said he wouldn't be surprised if the United States military would come in and take over some of these old fur trading forts as more and more emigrants were heading west.

Saturday, September 16
We crossed the Snake River for the last time yesterday, and today we cross the Malheur. It is only a small river about 50 feet wide and less than 2 feet deep, and we weren't too worried. In the middle of the crossing I heard a cry from Ellen. She said her baby was coming and she needed help. I don't think she was expecting it to come so soon. I called for Jenny and her Ma to come quick, then I gathered little Susanne and Luanne together, and we waited while the other women helped Ellen. After a while we heard a weak little cry come from the wagon. Susie and Annie had a new little brother. He has a crop of red hair, and he is so tiny. Susie and Annie slept with me under our wagon, but when we got up the next morning there were sad faces all around. Captain Jed pulled me aside and told me Ellen and her baby had both died in the night. I just wanted to burst out crying. I had lost my Ma, and now Ellen and her baby were gone too. Captain Jed said it was okay if I felt like crying. I just swallowed my tears and told him I would be strong for Annie and Susie, and for their Pa too. Ellen would have wanted that. I wrapped Annie and Susie up in Grandma's quilt, and told them their Ma had gone to heaven to take care of their new little brother. I knew she would still be looking down on them and watching over them, just like my Ma had been watching over me. We all cried a little, and Captain Jed and Parker dug a grave a ways off the trail to bury her and the baby. We gathered wild flowers along the banks of the river and laid them on the grave, patting it down real tight before we left in the morning. Jimmy scratched "Ellen McBride – September 16, 1848" on a large rock and we rolled it on top to mark her grave.

Monday, September 18
Ellen's husband couldn't bear to leave her just yet, so he and the twins decided to turn back to Fort Boise to stay for a spell, maybe even all winter. Jimmy asked if we could give Mr. McBride our cow, St. Louis. It was doubtful she would make it clear to Oregon with us, but maybe she would be a help to their family. I wanted to help in some way, too. I didn't have anything else to give them, except… I hoped Grandma Montgomery wouldn't be angry, but I gave the twins her quilt. I figured they would need it more than I would. I had made it this far, and I wasn't too skeered of anything anymore. Not Indians; not even dying. At Farewell Bend I waved goodbye to Annie, Susie, their Pa, Grandma's quilt, Ellen, and her little red haired baby. I couldn't help but cry a little. This was the last time I would be seeing the Snake River. Ahead of me was Oregon City and Pa.

Thursday, September 21
Burnt River Canyon was one of the roughest stretches of trail we have passed so far. There were fallen rocks which blocked the trail and caused a delay in our travel. When we finally reached the top of Flagstaff Hill, we could see a beautiful Oregon Valley. There were still the Blue Mountains to cross, but ahead lay a rich new land with lots of promise. It made our little group feel much better.

Saturday, September 23
The fog was dense at Grand Ronde so we prepared to camp early for the night, when several Cayuse Indians came riding their ponies into our camp. They were waving a white flag. We had heard the sad story about the Cayuse Indians dying from the measles epidemic, and their burning of the Whitman Mission, so everyone was cautious. One Indian handed Captain Jed a paper. Captain Jed called Parker to read it aloud: "Take notice emigrants. You will have to watch this Indian. He will steal anything he can get his hands on." It was signed by John Dawson and caused everyone to laugh, even the Indians. Captain Jed didn't laugh. His eyes were sad, and he turned to me, "Cassie, will you write something for me?" I tore a page out of the journal and he told me to write this note: "Take notice emigrants. We come in peace. As we all share this land, treat it with respect. Treat us with kindness." He gave the Chief Indian this new paper instead of the old one, so he could show it to other emigrants as they passed through their land as a token of friendship. Captain Jed may not be able to read or write, but he knows a lot about right and wrong, Pa. I can see why you trust him so much.

Monday, September 25
We rested at Grande Ronde over Sunday, and then crossed the Grande Ronde River early Monday morning. The local Indians were helpful and willing to trade with us.

Tuesday, September 26
We started our climb over the Blue Mountains. They were steep and rough, but not so bad to cross as I had expected. Unfortunately, during the night there was an early snowfall. This was the first time I had experienced such cold on this trip. I am sorry to say I was wishing I still had Grandma's quilt, not because I was skeered. I was just very, very cold! Captain Jed gave me a buffalo skin to wear, but Jimmy and I were still shivering. We couldn't sleep, and we kept whispering to each other, "We have come this far. Don't give up this close to meeting Pa." We had all walked nearly 2,000 miles. Jimmy had survived a rattlesnake bite, and had been the most courageous and cheerful pioneer of our whole camp. He was the best fisherman in camp too because of what he had learned from the Shoshonis. Parker had proven he was every bit as able to drive a herd of oxen or work as hard as any man in our company. He had even saved Jenny Smith's life. I had learned to cook, hunt and fish. I had gathered thousands of buffalo chips. I had made Indian friends and still had my precious Indian necklace to prove it. I really had been especially brave for the twins when Ellen and her baby died. If Ma were here she would tell me I really do have gumption! A little snow and cold feet will not stop us from reaching Oregon now.

Friday, September 29
On Wednesday we reached Emigrant Springs and found the remains of a few late berries. The snow had melted, although it was still awful cold at night. Next day we traveled through Deadman's Pass. I don't particularly like the name they chose for this place. It was another rough trail! It took us almost a whole day to go only six miles, but fortunately no one died. Today we finally went down Emigrant Hill. The trail split at the bottom of the hill. The north route led to the burned ruins of the Whitman Mission and Fort Walla Walla. Captain Jed said there was no need to head that way. We took the route straight ahead.

Sunday, October 1
We are now on the west side of the Blue Mountains. The camp on the Umatilla River Campsite is a very pleasant place. The Umatilla is a small stream with sandy banks. There is only dry prairie to be seen in every direction, but plenty of grass for our remaining oxen. Captain Jed wasn't his usual self today. He

seemed to be thinking real hard about something. I used up the last of our beans and made some hot soup for all of us. Finally, when other folks were reading their Bibles, he took me aside and said, “Cassie, could you teach me a little about reading and writing?” As much as Captain Jed has done for us, I was so glad to be able to do a little something for him. I told him a lot of people have never learned how to read, so it is nothing to be ashamed of. We sat and read for a few hours. He already knew a few words. He is real smart. He wanted to try and read the letters Pa had given him over a year ago telling him about us. Jed hadn’t received too many letters in his life, and he was real proud that our Pa had thought enough of him to give him the letters. As we read through them I began to wonder if Pa would know me when I met him in Oregon. I don’t think I am the same person he wrote about. Captain Jed is always busy helping someone, but I am hoping we will have time to read together again before we get to Oregon City.

Wednesday, October 4

We camped at Echo Meadows, and then traveled another two days through Four Mile Canyon. The nights are getting colder and wetter. Around the campfire Captain Jed had always told us stories of trapping and trading in these parts, but he never told us if he had family back home. Tonight around the campfire Jimmy asked him about his growing up years. When Jimmy has asked before, Captain Jed would just change the subject, and would tell us another yarn about mountain life. Tonight he finally told us about his childhood. He’d been taken away from his parents at a real young age and sold as a slave to a family moving to St. Louis. He remembered his folks, but didn’t know where they were now or if they were still alive. He believed they were still in Georgia, but with men trying to catch runaway slaves for a bounty, there was no way he would be traveling to the South to try to find them. He felt lucky his new owners in St. Louis were kind to him. He’d seen a lot of cruel punishment from owners who weren’t so kind to their slaves. His owners taught him how to be a blacksmith and told him he could work to earn his freedom. He did just that, and what a great day it was when his owner finally gave him a paper saying he was free. That very day he chose a new last name, “Freedman.” He was finally free! He said, “Nothing has ever tasted so sweet as freedom.” While working as a blacksmith he had talked to many a man who was planning to head west. It sounded like a good place to get a new start, so he joined up with William Ashley’s Fur Company. He never looked back.

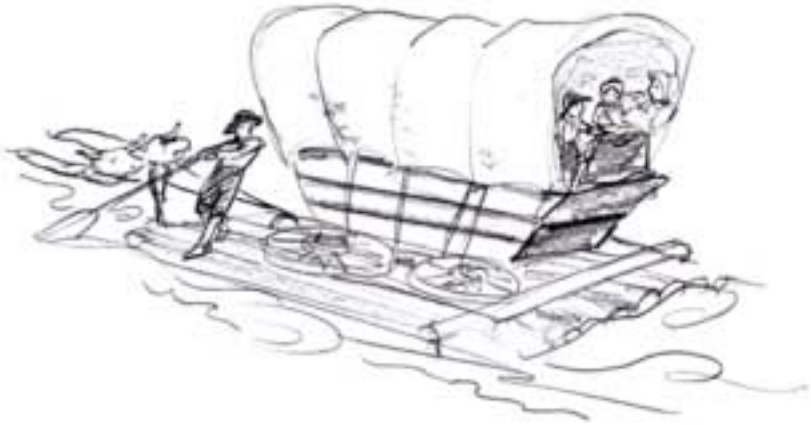
Friday, October 6

We crossed over the John Day River today. It is not too wide. It is also shallow and easy to cross this time of year. I keep thinking about being so close to the Cascade Mountains I was named for. Ma and Pa must have dreamed about coming to Oregon even before I was born. That’s why they named me Cascade Montgomery. Rather than raft down the Columbia River, I think I would like to climb those Cascade Mountains on my way to Oregon City.

Tuesday, October 10

On Sunday we rested at Biggs Junction. It was hard to rest, since most of us are so anxious to get to Oregon City. But Captain Jed said we needed to rest so we would have strength to finish the journey. I thought maybe he really wanted to rest so we could read a little more of James F. Cooper book, *The Pathfinder*. On Monday afternoon we crossed Deschutes River and then had the steep uphill climb of Deschutes Hill. We

found we did need all our strength to get up that hill. At this point an Indian traveling by told Captain Jed we were only two days from the Columbia.



Wednesday, October 11
We reached the Columbia River in a day and a half, at a place called the Dalles. It was time for another decision, and maybe another parting of the ways. Captain Jed said the Barlow Toll Road wasn't built when Pa went through the first time, and they had to raft down the Columbia River. They floated to the Cascade Portage and then hiked around the rough rapids to Fort Vancouver, just north of the Columbia near the mouth of the Willamette River. There was a line of folks ahead of us waiting to raft down the Columbia, but he figured it would take another two weeks to get to Oregon City either way we went. He had heard the Barlow Toll Road would cost around $5 a wagon, and 10 cents per oxen. From this point on, he felt our company didn't need to stay together. We could all make our own decision about which way we wanted to go. I took one look at that wide Columbia River and knew the way I wanted to go, and that was by land. Neither Jimmy nor I were good enough swimmers to last long on the Columbia if we had a mishap. I voted to take the Barlow Road. Jimmy and Parker voted to take the land route too.

Thursday, October 12
We took the Barlow Toll Road and reached Fifteen Mile Creek Campsite, toward the south slope of the mountain. There was good water. Food was scarce, but we traded for some dried peas and potatoes from the Indians. It tasted good at supper. The trees were all turning autumn colors, and it was truly a beautiful sight. It is time to head out this morning, and I am so glad we are walking on dry land. I don't know how Pa dared to raft on that wild Columbia River.

Saturday, October 14
We have reached Tygh Valley. We plan to rest here through Sunday, even though we are want to keep moving on to Oregon City and are especially anxious to see our Pa! Captain Jed heard there was a steep uphill climb ahead, and then an even steeper descent. It has him worried. Parker said we may even have to use ropes to lower down the wagons, and with so few men left in our company this could be a real test. It will take everyone working together to get through this last pass.

Friday, October 20
On Tuesday, we started our uphill climb at Devil's Half Acre. It is named that for a reason. We are all awful tired, and it is a mean climb. We camped at Barlow Pass tonight, at a place called Summit Meadows. Tomorrow we have to start downhill. Captain Jed says we should just pray it doesn't rain. He heard this part could be real treacherous, especially after a rain.

Saturday, October 21
We are in mountain country now. Taking the wagons up the hills is hard, but it is even more dangerous taking them down. We started early as usual and traveled eight miles to Laurel Hills. The road looked narrow and fearsome, with steep banks on both sides! There was hardly any room to walk next to the wagons. We cut down a small tree and fastened it to the rear axle with ropes. The first wagon went through that way but the tree didn't slow it down enough. The wagon fell out of control, and the wheel and axle were broken by the time it reached the bottom of the hill. Trunks, dishes, pots, pans, and food from the broken wagon were strewn everywhere. Captain Jed and the men decided not to take a chance with the other two wagons. They felt we could still reach Oregon City if we were careful and lowered the last two wagons down with ropes over the side of this steep hill. The Smiths' wagon went down smooth enough, with the oxen pulling on one side, and the men guiding it on the other. Captain Jed was shouting directions to the others and helping to guide the wagon down the hill. Things didn't go as smoothly with our wagon. If it weren't for Parker, I think our wagon would have turned over and everything would have smashed on the rocks below, too. Parker was on the side of the wagon trying to keep it steady. The rope holding his side of the wagon broke, but somehow Parker grabbed the wagon and just pushed with all his strength. I don't know how he managed to keep the wagon from falling until one of the men could attach another rope to hold it. I just held my breath knowing any minute Parker could be crushed! Not even Ma's precious keepsakes or my books were worth that to me. Finally the wagon steadied itself, and it reached the bottom safely. I let out a sigh of relief. Parker was alive! We are all so very grateful to be down that last hill! Later that night I saw Captain Jed take Parker aside to thank him. He'd risked his life to save our wagon. I never saw Parker look so proud.

Monday, October 23
We were happy to use the Sandy River Toll Bridge, rather than cut through the steep banks and forests in order to cross the Sandy River. It saved us a lot of time and was well worth the trade of an Indian blanket Captain Jed had. Only three days away from Oregon City!

Wednesday, October 25
We are about to see our Pa! I am so nervous. It has been four years! Will I recognize him? Will he recognize us?

Wednesday, October 26
Oregon City! The most beautiful sight I ever did see. It is situated near the Willamette Falls, with houses and farms, mills, storehouses, and shops. I bet there is even a school! So this is our new home. When I saw my Pa, I just ran to him with tears rolling down my cheeks. There were tears rolling down his cheeks too. I was so happy to see him! I think even Jimmy and Parker cried a little, especially when Pa grabbed Captain Jed and gave him a big, big hug. How do you thank a man who has just brought your family safely across the Oregon Trail? We will all be forever in his debt. It has been the hardest journey of my life, but I think this is every bit what Ma dreamed it would be! We made it! We are finally home.